

Senior Defensive Captain Von Miller EXAS ASM

Senior Linebacker Michael Hodges

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TEXAS A&M

12



THE TEXAS AGGIES LOOK TO PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON A STELLAR SEASON

ALSO INSIDE

Butkus Winner Von Miller 2011 Recruiting Update Aggie Basketball Michael Hodges **Jake Matthews** Luke Joeckel And More ...

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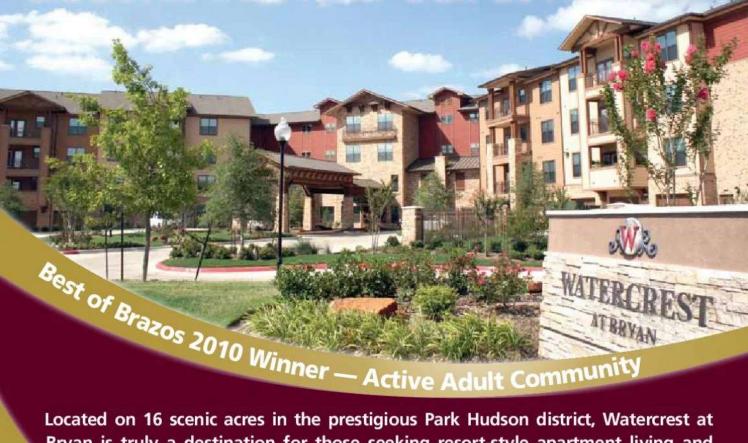
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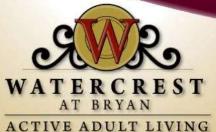
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Seizing the Moment

Against all obstacles, senior linebacker Michael Hodges fulfilled his dream of playing college football.

O' SMAN DAVIS '01

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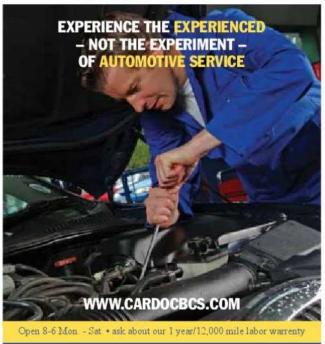
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FIND THE 01

On the Cover: Texas A&M seniors Jerrod Johnson, Terrence McCoy, Von Miller and Michael Hodges. Photo by Brian Davis '01.















publisher'snote

Howdy!

What a November to remember. When a friend and fellow journalist told me that the Ags were going to win out following the Kansas game, I'm pretty sure I called him crazy, although I sure hoped he'd be right. Well let's just say I've never been happier to be wrong.

The 2010 football season was a heck of a ride and while I think the team deserved a shot at the Big 12 title, a Cotton Bowl battle against rival LSU will be an incredible way to finish a great year.

Back in the September issue, we made 12 bold predictions about the season. Now it's time to see how bold we really were:

- Both Cyrus Gray and Ryan Swope will return at least one kickoff for a touchdown this season. While neither player had one, Coryell Judie's two returns for touchdowns in back to back games was a nice substitute.
- Every time the Aggies win the turnover battle, they'll win the game. This was true, but surprisingly the Aggies only won the turnover battle four times this season.
- Christine Michael will run for over 1,000 yards. Unfortunately Michael's season was cut short with a broken leg, but Cyrus Gray stepped in and became A&M's first 1,000-yard back since Courtney Lewis in 2003.
- 4. The Aggies will beat Texas Tech in back-to-back seasons for the first time since 1993-94. Ryan Tannehill had a school-record 449 yards passing and four touchdowns in his first career start as Texas A&M defeated the Red Raiders, 45-27, on a glorious day at Kyle Field.
- 5. Ryan Tannehill will throw and catch a touchdown pass in the same game. It nearly happened in the Louisiana Tech game, but the Aggies clearly didn't want to throw for the end zone late in the game and run up the score. In a rare stat, Tannehill has a 400-yard passing game and a 200-yard receiving game in his career.
- College Gameday will come to Aggieland for a game this season. Gameday should have been here for the Nebraska game instead of at Wrigley Field. Huge mistake by ESPN.
- 7. The Aggies will make a play on special teams that wins them a dose game. Randy Bullock's three field goals in the 9-6 victory over Nebraska qualifies here. The Ags also made multiple special teams plays in the Baylor game that contributed to that win.
- The Aggies will beat at least one out of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska. The Ags won two out of three of these big games.
- Ryan Swope will be the team's leading receiver this season.
 Swope barely edged out Jeff Fuller (65) with a school-record 67 receptions during the regular season.
- 10. Jerrod Johnson will hold every major A&M passing record by the end of the year. Although Johnson's season certainly didn't go as expected, he still added to his record-setting career and will leave Texas A&M with career school records for total offense, passing yards, passing touchdowns, completions and attempts, 300-yard passing games and touchdown responsibility.
- 11. The defense will force at least 30 turnovers during the season. They finished just short with 24 turnovers (15 interceptions and 9 fumbles), but more importantly earned the Wrecking Crew name back with some unforgettable performances. We weren't bold enough to predict that.
- The Aggies will celebrate Thanksgiving on their way home from Austin after beating t.u. Ags win, 24-17. Whoop!

Gig'em Ags and BTHO LSU!

Bun 101

Aggieland

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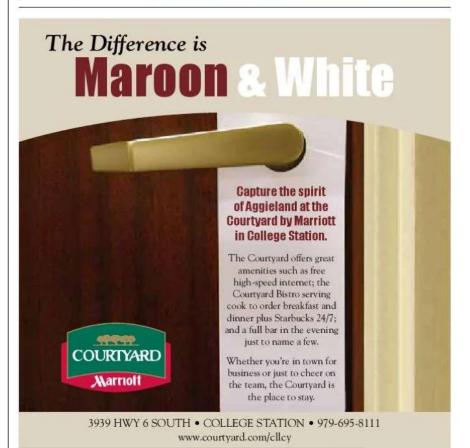
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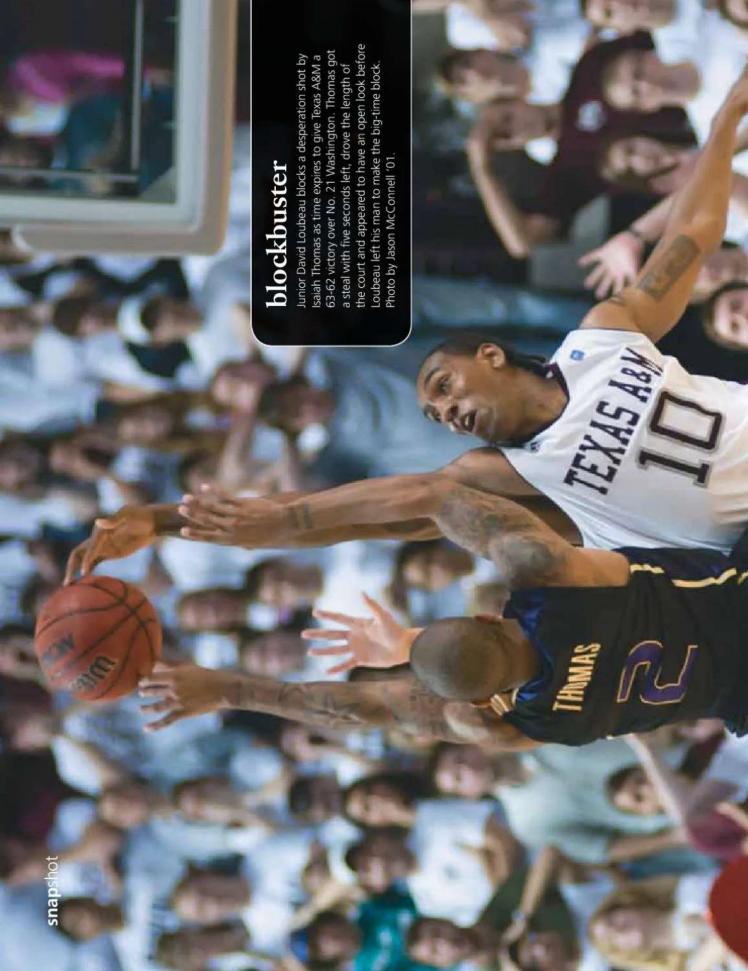




























sweet reward

Senior All-American Von Miller received the 2010 Butkus Award, which is given annually to the nation's top collegiate linebacker, in a surprise ceremony from NFL legend Dick Butkus at the Bright Football Complex. Miller finished the regular season as one of the nation's most disruptive defenders with 9.5 sacks, 14.5 tackles for losses, six batted down passes, three forced fumbles and two recovered fumbles. First inset photo by Glen Johnson, Texas A&M Athletics Media Relations. All others by Jason McConnell '01.





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2011 FOOTBALL VERBALS

With signing day just around the corner, head football coach Mike Sherman and his staff are busy putting the finishing touches on their 2011 recruiting class. Some prospects have jumped in the boat within the last few weeks, while others have been committed since their junior seasons. At 19 commitments so far and with such a small senior class departing, this list isn't likely to expand too much more between now and signing day.



DONNIE BAGGS (LB)
6-1, 205 ◆ Clear Springs (League City, TX)
Very talented athlete could play either inside or outside line-



TAYLOR BERTOLET (K)
5-9, 165 • Exeter Township (PA) (Reading, PA)
One of the top kickers in the nation, Bertolet could contribute immediately at kicker or punter.



DEVONTA BURNS (DB)6-0, 200 • Martin (Arlington, TX)
Prototypical big safety, combining tremendous size with a sub-4.5 40-yard dash.



JOSEPH CHEEK (OL) 6-7, 270 • Seguin (Seguin, TX) Son of former A&M and NFL offensive lineman Louis Cheek is blessed with tremendous upside potential.



BEN COMPTON (OL)
6-4, 310 • Friendswood (Friendswood, TX)
2010: Graded 97 percent, 23 pancakes, 1 sack allowed in 293
pass attempts. 4A First Team All-State (AP).



MIKE EVANS (WR)
6-5, 180 • Ball (Galveston, TX)
Adds great size, speed and athleticism to the Texas
A&M receiving corps.



DESHAZOR EVERETT (DB)
6-0, 170 • DeRidder (LA) (DeRidder, LA)
Had a breakout senior season with 130 tackles, 10 TFLs, 3 sacks, 6 quarterback hurries, 3 PBUs, and an interception.



JOHNTEL FRANKLIN (DB) 6-2, 200 • Victor Valley C.C. (CA) (Victorville, CA) Played high school football in the Milwaukee area before originally signing with Illinois State.



NATHAN GUTEKUNST (OL)
6-6, 290 • Atascocita (Humble, TX)
Could play any position on the offensive line. Wants to go into the Christian ministry after his playing days are over.



SHAYVION HATTEN (DE) 6-4, 260 • Daingerfield (Daingerfield, TX) One of the state's best and most athletically-gifted defensive linemen, Hatten switched his commitment from TCU in July.



JONATHON HENDERSON (ATH)
5-9, 185 • Leander (Leander, TX)
An offensive athlete who will most likely play in the slot when he arrives at A&M.



STEVEN JENKINS (LB) 6-2, 205 • Coffeyville C.C. (KS) (Coffeyville, KS) Will have three years of eligibility at A&M and will fight for playing time at inside linebacker immediately.



JOHNNY MANZIEL (QB) 6-1, 195 • Kerrville Tivy (Kerrville, TX) 2010: 2,958 passing yards and 38 TD's; 1,414 rushing yards and 24 TD's; 1 TD reception; 1 kickoff return for a TD.



HOWARD MATTHEWS (ATH)
6-2, 200 • Clear Springs (League City, TX)
Has the athleticism and playmaking ability to be a defensive back, receiver or both at the college level.



WILL RANDOLPH (RB)
5-9, 175 • Copperas Cove (Copperas, TX)
One of the state's fastest players, Randolph committed to the Aggies in November.



LAMARC STRAHAN (DT) 6-4, 365 • Blinn JC (Brenham, TX) Considered the perfect fit for the Ags 3-4 defense and is a player who could have a major impact on next year's team.



TYRELL TAYLOR (LB)
6-4, 205 • Galena Park (Galena, TX)
One of the state's best kept secrets. Has great speed and athleticism for his size.



SHAUN WARD (LB)6-2, 225 • Boyd Anderson (FL) (Ft. Lauderdale, FL)
A blue chip of the class, he's an outstanding fit into A&M's 3-4 defense as the "Joker" (Von Miller's position as a senior).



KENNY WILLIAMS (RB)
5-10, 205 • Pflugerville Hendrickson (Pflugerville, TX)
Central Texas standout switched his commitment to Texas
A&M from Texas Tech in mid December.

AGGIE BASEBALL SIGNS 11 IN 2011 CLASS

Eleven student-athletes signed letters of intent to join the Texas A&M baseball program next fall.

Chance Bolcerek (Brenham), Jason Jester (Halsville/Tyler JC), Matthew Kent (Waco), Cole Lankford (Houston), Daniel Mengden (Houston), Mitchell Nau (Houston), Corey Ray (Houston), Mikey Reynolds (Glendale, Ariz/Paradise Valley CC), Ty Schlottmann (Brenham), Gandy Stubblefield (Lufkin) and Dillon Thomas (Houston) comprise the 2011 signing class.

"This class may be one of the most talented classes we have put together here at Texas A&M," head coach Rob Childress said. "Justin Seely and Matt Deggs worked very hard to assemble this group of not only talented baseball players but quality young men. We have very good balance in this class with five position players and five pitchers along with a very special two-way player in Daniel Mengden. On the pitching side we were able to sign two very talented left handed pitchers in Ty and Matt and three right handed pitchers in Corey, Gandy and Jason that we feel like all have a chance to come in and make an immediate impact. Positionally, we feel like we signed two of the best catchers in the state in Cole and Mitchell. Our other two in-state kids we signed we feel are two of the most talented left handed bats in the state of Texas in Chance and Dillon. We also signed a very talented junior college infielder as well in Mikey who will give us some added stability in the middle infield next year."

MEN'S BASKETBALL AND PREVIOUS PAGE: BILLY LIUCCI'S TEXAGS PREMIUM/ALL OTHERS: TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS MEDIA RELATIONS

MEN'S BASKETBALL SIGNS TWO TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUTS

Jamal Branch and Jordan Green have signed national lettersof-intent to play college basketball at Texas A&M.

"We are excited about our 2011 class so far," head coach Mark Turgeon said. "We feel like we have added two quality, highcharacter young men that will fill needs for our program. Jordan and Jamal will fit in great with what we have coming back next year, plus Jamal and Jordan will complement each other throughout their careers."

Branch and Green are highly-rated guards out of the Dallas area and will join the A&M program for the 2011-12 season.

"These two guys play well off each other, Jamal being the facilitator and Jordan being the drop-the-hammer, go get buckets kind of guy," said Dave Telep, ESPN.com's college basketball recruiting analyst. "I think these guys together should be the backcourt of the future for Texas A&M."



JAMAL BRANCH, G

6-3 • Grace Preparatory Academy (Arlington, TX) A consensus four-star prospect. Named the best defender

in the Class of 2011 by scout.com and ranked No. 47 nationally. Rated the No. 8 point guard in the country and No. 53 overall by ESPN.com. A member of the ESPNU 100. Grades at 94 out of 100 by ESPN.com. The No. 5 prospect in Texas and No. 67 nationally by rivals.com. Chose Texas A&M over Texas, Kansas, UCLA, UNLV and Utah



JORDAN GREEN, G

6-4 • Flower Mound (Flower Mound, TX)

Rated among the top shooting guards in the class by both ESPN.com and Scout.com. Ranked 12th overall in Texas by history to sign a Division I basketball scholarship straight out of high school. Chose Texas A&M over Marquette, Oklahoma State, UNLV and

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL INKS THIRD STRAIGHT TOP 10 CLASS

For the third consecutive year, the Texas A&M women's basketball program has landed one of the top recruiting classes in the nation with the signing of three top-rated high school prospects who will join the nationally-ranked Aggies for the 2011-12 season.

A&M welcomes 6-foot-7 center Rachel Mitchell out of Atascocita High School in Houston, 5-foot-10 guard Tori Scott from John Ehret High School in Marrero, La., and 5-foot-8 guard Alexia Standish out of Colleyville Heritage High School in Colleyville, Texas. This Aggie recruiting class has been ranked as high as No. 3 in the country by The Collegiate Girls Basketball Report.

"A recruiting class might fill needs not just wants and I believe we have done that with our 2011 signees," head coach Gary Blair said. This class will be remembered as the highest-ranked class to ever sign at Texas A&M. My staff of Kelly Bond, Vic Schaefer and Johnnie Harris should be commended as they continue to do it year in and year out. They consistently find quality young ladies with good academics who are all from good programs, and they are players that want to win at the highest level."

Last year, the Aggies signed the fifth-best recruiting class in the country.



RACHEL MITCHELL, C

6-7 • Atascocita (Humble, TX)

Rated the No. 4 center in the country by ESPN Hoopgurlz and the No. 1 post player in the state by Premier Basketball Report, Mitchell is on the watch list for the 2011 McDonald's High

School All-America team. In addition to being named to the 2010 Preseason All-Greater Houston Second Team, Mitchell was an all-district first team selection in 2009.



TORI SCOTT, G

5-10 • John Ehret (Marrero, LA)

Rated the No. 6 guard in the nation and the No. 1 overall prospect from the state of Louisiana by ESPN Hoopgurlz, Scott is a two-time all-state first team honoree who is also on the

watch list for the 2011 McDonald's High School All-America team. She averaged 15.9 points and 7.2 rebounds per game as a junior. Scott was also the 2009 Metro Area District 9-5A Player of the Year.



ALEXIA STANDISH, G

5-8 • Colleyville Heritage (Colleyville, TX)

Rated the No. 5 point guard in the country and the No. 1 point guard in the Lone Star State by ESPN Hoopgurlz, Standish is the third Aggie signee named to the 2011 McDonald's High

School All-America Watch List. Standish was a gold medalist on the USA Women's Basketball U16 National Team in Mexico City in 2009 She averaged 17.9 points and 5.4 assists per game as a junior.

FIVE SIGN WITH TEXAS A&M SOFTBALL

Five high school seniors signed national letters of intent to play softball at Texas A&M. Sara Mireles (San Antonio, Texas), Lauren Ainsley (LaVernia, Texas), Lauren Bixler-Tamayo (Roanoke, Texas), Brittany Clopton (Montgomery, Texas) and Kayla Klein (Whittier, Cali.) join the Aggies for the 2011-12 season.

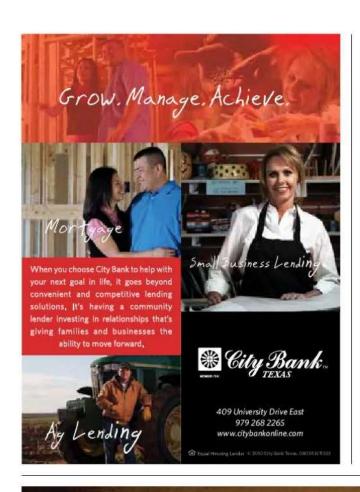
"I am pleased with this recruiting class," head coach Jo Evans said. "They are all excited about being an Aggie and they have already engrained themselves into our program. With the addition of three pitchers we solidify ourselves on the mound. Each pitcher is very different from the other, so we have the opportunity to show our opponents several different looks."

Mireles is a two time all-area MVP and garnered a 37-5 winloss record from the circle in 2010. In her first two years at Canyon High School, the left-handed pitcher threw 25 shutouts, seven no-hitters and four perfect games.

Ainsley led the La Vernia High School team to three consecutive district championship titles from the circle and was named Area MVP in 2010.

Bixler-Tamavo was named to the All-District first team and All-State second team in both 2009 and 2010.

Clopton is a three-time TGCA 4A All-State and 18-4A Academic All-District selection.





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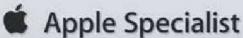
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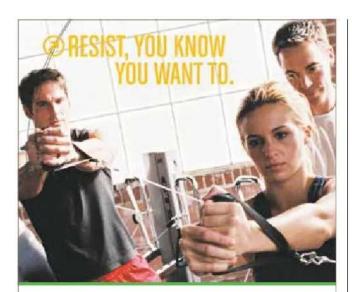


With one game remaining in 2010, the men's basketball team is riding an eight-game winning streak, their longest in two years. The No. 18 Aggies are 11-1, with their lone defeat coming in a heartbreaker against Boston College in the opening round of the Old Spice Classic. In their other big tests against No. 20 Temple, No. 21 Washington and Arkansas, Mark Turgeon's team has prevailed in games that have gone down to the wire. The Aggies have struggled offensively at times, but are winning with suffocating defense and dominating the boards. They've out-rebounded every opponent this season and are 75-13 under Turgeon when matching or out-rebounding their foes. Early in his sophomore campaign, Khris Middleton has emerged as the best scoring threat with 15.4 points per game.









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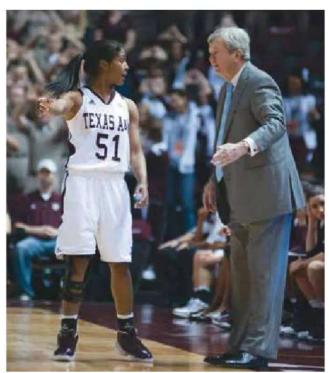
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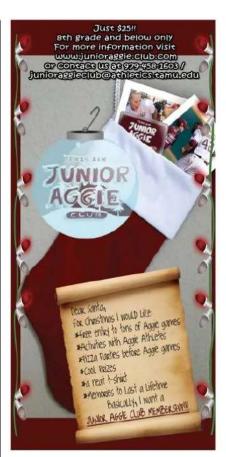
The women's basketball team is off to a 9-1 start and has climbed to a No. 5 national ranking. Their only loss came by three points at then-No. 5 Duke in what head coach Gary Blair called a heavyweight fight. Six of their nine wins have come by 29 or more points while the dosest victory was by nine points over Arizona. Senior Danielle Adams is having an All-American season, averaging 21.9 points and 8.6 rebounds per game. Adams scored a career-high 33 points in the 91-66 win over TCU - good for fourth-most in A&M history and the most since 2001. "She's special," Coach Blair said. "We better enjoy her while we can."

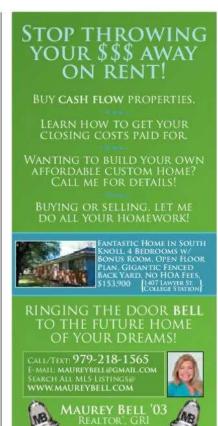














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After ripping off six straight victories to close out the regular season and claim a share of the Big 12 South title, the Aggies have been rewarded with a berth in the 75th Cotton Bowl Classic against an LSU squad that spent most of the regular season ranked in the top 10. The Cotton Bowl selected the Aggies as the Big 12 representative over every other team in the conference except Oklahoma, who earned an automatic appearance in a BCS bowl with their victory over Nebraska in the Big 12 Championship game. While a shot at the title would have been sweet, a chance to play in what's arguably the top non-BCS bowl against a nationally ranked SEC opponent on network television during prime time is quite the consolation prize.

The Tigers enter the Cotton Bowl matchup coming off a 31-23 loss to Arkansas that slipped their record to 10-2 and ended their hope for an at-large BCS berth. Prior to that contest, LSU's only loss was to top-ranked Auburn on the road. For head coach Les Miles, the chance to close out the season in one of the great bowls in college football history is a tremendous opportunity.

"The Cotton Bowl is one of the all-time great college bowl games and to be able to participate in what is the 75th anniversary of this legendary game will be special for our team," Miles said. "I've been here before as a head coach so I know firsthand what a first-class bowl this is. The hospitality is second to none and the atmosphere is no different than if you were playing in the national championship game.

"I'm excited and I know that our players are excited about this opportunity. Texas A&M has an outstanding program and we

are looking forward to renewing our long-standing rivalry with them."

Texas A&M coach Mike Sherman echoed Miles' sentiments.

"It's an honor to play in the 75th Cotton Bowl and play an opponent like LSU who has won a bunch of ball games," Sherman said. "We're excited about both opportunities. Very seldom do you ever play a rival like that who's been in your history in a bowl game (For more on the LSU-A&M series rivalry, turn to page 29). It's neat that we're bordering states and the fan base is equally passionate on both sides of the border. It'll be a fun game."

For the Aggies, the Cotton Bowl is about redemption. Over the past two seasons, A&M has dropped three games to SEC opponents, twice to Arkansas in the Southwest Classic and the third in last year's Independence Bowl matchup against Georgia. Despite their losses, the Aggies showed marked improvement over the course of each of those games and look to be poised to finally take down a mighty SEC opponent. With a renewed running game, an aggressive Tim DeRuyter defense and a home field advantage, the chips could finally fall in favor of the maroon and white.

Should the Aggies emerge victorious over LSU on January 7, they'll almost certainly catapult the program into top ten preseason contention in 2011, and will have recorded the first ten win season in over a decade. Though a loss wouldn't diminish what the Aggies were able to accomplish this season, a seventh straight win would certainly be icing on the cake.

THE COACHES



MIKE SHERMAN, TEXAS A&M

A former head coach and general manager for the NFL's Green Bay Packers, Mike Sherman is in his third season as head coach of the Texas A&M football team. The Aggies have improved each year of his tenure and earned a Co-Big 12 South Championship in 2010.

Head Coaching Record: 19-18 (all at Texas A&M) Bowl Record: 0-1



LES MILES, LSU

Now six years into his job as head coach of the Tigers, Les Miles has won more games than any coach in LSU history during a 6-year span. The Tigers also daimed the BCS National Championship and the Southeastern Conference title under Miles in 2007.

Head Coaching Record: 89-38 (61-17 at LSU) Bowl Record: 4-1

EDGE: LSU

We think Sherman will prove he is the better gameday coach, but since this is their first meeting, Miles gets the nod based on his bowl history alone.

TEXAS A&M AGGIES (9-3)	75 TH COTTON BOWL BY THE NUMBERS	LSU TIGERS (10-2)
OFFENSIVE STATISTICS		DEFENSIVE STATISTICS
447.58 (22)	Total Offense/Defense (National Rank)	301.67 (9)
31.83 (37)	Scoring Offense/Defense	17.75 (9)
165.83 (42)	Rushing Offense/Defense	135.83 (37)
281.75 (18)	Passing Offense/Defense	165.83 (9)
42.2% (48)	3rd Down Conversion % Offense/Defense	34.7% (20)
80.75 (2)	Offensive Plays Per Game	63.09 (14)
87.5% (26)	Red Zone Offense/Defense	79.3% (43)
23.83 (16)	First Downs Offense/Defense	15.67 (6)
2.92 (108)	Sacks Allowed Per Game/ Sacks Per Game	2.67 (17)
131.6 (54)	Passing Efficiency/Passing Efficiency Defense	112.94 (20)
DEFENSIVE STATISTICS		OFFENSIVE STATISTICS
357.5 (52)	Total Defense/Offense (National Rank)	332.58 (93)
20.33 (27)	Scoring Defense/Offense	28.75 (50)
117 (15)	Rushing Defense/Offense	177.17 (35)
240.5 (93)	Passing Defense/Offense	155.42 (107)
34.3% (16)	3rd Down Conversion % Defense/Offense	36.3% (88)
76.42 (117)	Defensive Plays Per Game	63.75 (98)
62.8% (3)	Red Zone Defense/Offense	87% (30)
19.92 (69)	First Downs Defense/Offense	17 (99)
2.33 (35)	Sacks Per Game/Sacks Allowed Per Game	1.83 (54)
114.72 (27)	Passing Efficiency Defense/ Passing Efficiency	114.45 (99)





HARDWARE ON DISPLAY IN ARLINGTON

Fans of great defense will be in for a rare treat at the 75th Cotton Bowl Classic as winners of three national awards will be on the field thanks to LSU's two-time All-American Patrick Peterson (left) and Texas A&M's two-time All-American Von Miller (right).

Passing Efficiency

Patrick Peterson (JR)

6-1, 222 Cornerback Born July 11, 1990

Ely High School (Pompano Beach, FL) Fun Fact: Peterson went by the last name "Johnson" when he signed with LSU, but formally changed it to "Peterson" in 2008.

2010 Bednarik Award Winner

Nation's Top Defender

2010 Thorpe Award Winner Nation's Top Defensive Back

Von Miller (SR)

6-3, 243 "Joker" Born March 26, 1989 DeSoto High School (DeSoto, TX)

Fun Fact: Miller played a different position each season while at A&M. He played defensive end as a freshman, outside linebacker as a sophomore, "jack" as a junior and "joker" as a senior.

2010 Butkus Award Winner

Nation's Top Linebacker.



A&M O-LINE VS. LSU D-LINE

The Aggie offensive line got better and better as the season went on due mostly to the progression of the two true freshmen tackles, Luke Joeckel and Jake Matthews. The talented youngsters are practically sophomores now and will need to play well to win the trenches against a loaded Tiger defensive line.

Senior center Matt Allen will have a bit of extra motivation in this one. Not only is this his last game in maroon and white, it's against his old team. Allen was a member of the LSU program for two years before transferring to A&M.

As for LSU, they could safely be referred to as D-line U. Since the 2003 season, LSU has had five defensive linemen earn a total of six First-Team All-America honors and 10 members of its defensive line have been selected in the NFL Draft



TIGER TO WATCH

Allen and the rest of the Aggie interior line will be challenged from the opening snap by senior All-American defensive tackle **Drake Nevis**. A four-time SEC Defensive Lineman of the Week and First-Team All-SEC selection in 2010, Nevis is tied for a team-high with six sacks and is fourth in tackles. He also leads the team in tackles for loss with 13. Nevis is one of the strongest players the Ags will have faced and has a motor that does not stop. Keeping him away from Cyrus Gray and Ryan Tannehill in the backfield will be instrumental to A&M's success.

EDGE: LSU

This battle could go either way and the Aggies have already faced some tough defensive lines this season and prevailed, but the Tigers have a slight edge with their experience in the trenches.

A&M BACKS VS. LSU BACKERS

Cyrus Gray finished the regular season playing on another level. The junior from DeSoto had six straight 100-yard rushing games, which is the most since Darren Lewis had 10 in 1988. Even more

impressive are some of the defenses he did it against: Oklahoma, 122 yards and a touchdown; Nebraska, 137 yards on 26 carries; and Texas, 223 yards and two touchdowns.

Gray will once again be put to the test by one of the best defenses in the nation. Dating back to last year, LSU has allowed only 22 rushing touchdowns in its last 25 games. Led by senior Kelvin Sheppard and junior Ryan Baker, the Tiger linebackers are as good as it gets.

TIGER TO WATCH

The unquestioned leader of LSU's defense, **Kelvin Sheppard** is a third-year starter and one of the top middle linebackers in college football. The First-Team All-SEC standout leads the Tigers with 108 tackles including 11 for a loss. At 6-3, 240 pounds, Sheppard has the size and speed to bring down running backs in the open field or drop into coverage and play sideline-to-sideline.



EDGE: TEXAS A&M

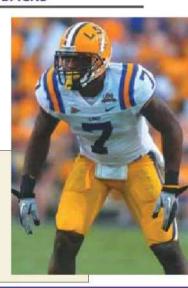
LSU's linebackers are elite, but Cyrus Gray has proven that he can run against anybody, especially if given enough carries. Tough yards will be key to this game and Gray should be up to the challenge.

A&M PASSING GAME VS. LSU DEFENSIVE BACKS

Lost in the shuffle of quarterback transition from Jerrod Johnson to Ryan Tannehill has been the continued strong play of the offense. The 2010 offense remains on pace to break the team passing record and produce A&M's No. 2 total offense output. Junior Jeff Fuller, a first-team All-Big 12 selection, is in a tight battle with Ryan Swope for the Aggies' season catches record and he already owns the season marks for receiving yards and touchdown catches. Fuller's record total of 983 receiving yards puts him just 17 yards away from the magical 1,000-yard mark. Those yards won't come easy as Fuller will line up across from the best defensive back in college football in the Cotton Bowl.



Called one of college football's "Freaks" by ESPN's Bruce Feldman because of his combination of size, speed and strength, LSU junior cornerback **Patrick Peterson** is as good as they get. A consensus First-Team All-America selection, Peterson won the 2010 Bednarik Award as the nation's top defender and the 2010 Thorpe Award as the nation's top defensive back. An elite athlete with outstanding speed, Peterson is the only player in LSU history to have scored at least one touchdown in these three categories: an interception return, a blocked field goal and punt return (twice).



EDGE: LSU

Ryan Tannehill and the A&M receivers will have to take what the stingy LSU pass defense gives them and it likely won't be much room to make many easy throws.



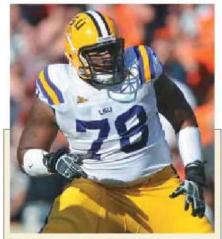
1944 ORANGE BOWL ~ LSU 19, Texas A&M 14 ~ January 1, 1944

Homer Norton's fourth and last bowl team for A&M, a freshman and sophomore-laden team known as the "Kiddie Corps," ended a 7-2-1 season with a close loss as Louisiana State edged the Aggies. Tiger halfback Steve Van Buren rushed for 172 yards and scored two touchdowns and passed for another to lead the way for LSU. Van Buren's 63-yard scoring run in the third quarter dinched the decision. A&M had defeated LSU, 28-13, earlier in the season at Baton Rouge.

Fun Fact: The Tigers traveled to Miami for the Orange Bowl by train and automobiles. The team returned to Baton Rouge in 18 used cars and most of them ran out of fuel stamps before making it back to campus.

A&M D-LINE VS. LSU O-LINE

A surprise strength of this year's Aggie defense was the line led by first-year position coach Terrell Williams. Unfortunately, they could be playing shorthanded as starting end Tony Jerod-Eddie may miss the bowl game as he recovers from surgery. If he's unable to go, reserves Spencer Nealy and Ben Bass will have to step up their games to win the trenches against and an imposing LSU offensive line.



TIGER TO WATCH

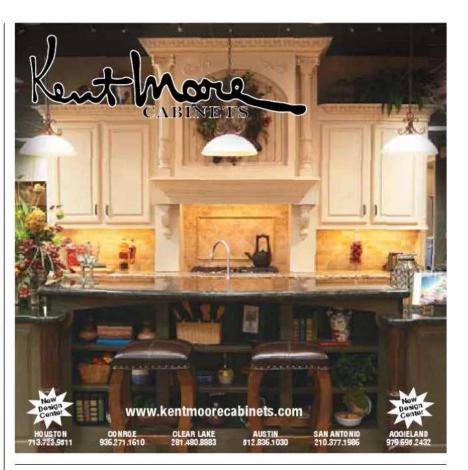
Former five-star recruit **Joseph Barksdale** anchors the LSU offensive line as the starting left tackle. The 6-6, 318-pound senior is the Tigers' most experienced lineman and was a Second-Team All-SEC selection. While he will have to battle some Aggie defensive lineman in the trenches, Barksdale's most unenviable task will be trying to slow down All-American Von Miller who will be hungry for Tiger quarterbacks.

EDGE: TEXAS A&M

Having Jerod-Eddie would make this an easier pick, but the Aggie d-line still should be able to control the line of scrimmage against LSU.

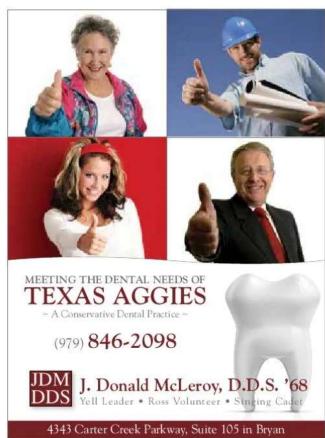
AGGIES AND TIGERS THE RIVALRY

The Aggies and the Tigers first faced off on the gridiron in 1899 with A&M winning, 52-0, in College Station. LSU leads the overall series, 26-20-3, however A&M has won the last five meetings. The most recent meeting took place in College Station in 1995 with the Ags winning, 33-17. From 1960 through 1975, the Aggies faced LSU in Baton Rouge every year with LSU posting a 12-3-1 record. The series was renewed in 1986 through 1995 rotating between Baton Rouge and College Station and A&M held a 6-4 advantage in those contests. The schools have met in a bowl game once before with LSU winning, 19-14 in the 1944 Orange Bowl (left).









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A&M BACKERS VS. LSU BACKS

The return to a 3-4 defense this season was perhaps most beneficial to the A&M linebacking corps. Michael Hodges, Sean Porter, Garrick Williams and Von Miller all played fanatically all over the field, bringing back the Wrecking Crew brand of football. LSU relies on their rushing attack to pound the football, so this will be a key matchup in the game.

TIGER TO WATCH

First-Team All-SEC running back Stevan Ridley is the Tiger every A&M and LSU fan is watching, but not for his abilities on the field. The junior was ruled ineligible for the Cotton Bowl by the NCAA for academic misconduct. LSU has appealed, but may not get a response until they are already in Arlington preparing for the game.

EDGE: TEXAS A&M

If Ridley is out, this is a huge edge for the Aggies. If he is able to play, this could be the key matchup of the game - the Ags ability to stop the run.

A&M DEFENSIVE BACKS VS. LSU PASSING GAME

While the Aggie defensive backs don't appear on the nation's award lists like LSU's Peterson, the group has been one of the staples on a markedly improved defense this year. The combination of Trent Hunter, Terrence Frederick, Coryell Judie and Steven Campbell is staunch against both the run and the pass. Frederick is one of the nation's best against the bubble screen, posting 8 tackles for loss throughout the season. Sophomore Dustin Harris leads the team in interceptions at 4, and isn't even a starter.

LSU has a stable of wideouts that would make most NFL team's blush. Reuben Randle, Terrence Toliver and Russell Shepard were each five-star recruits coming out of high school. Problem is, they don't have anyone to get them the ball. The combination of Jordan Jefferson and Jarrett Lee combined for just 155 passing yards per game (107 national ranking) and a passing efficiency of 114 (99th nationally).

TIGER TO WATCH

While junior Jordan Jefferson has struggled to throw the ball, he is a mobile quarterback who can be dangerous in the open field. He has also engineered five fourth quarter/overtime comebacks during his career.

EDGE: TEXAS A&M

If the Aggies can prevent the supremely talented LSU receiving corps from breaking off a big play, they should be able to contain the Tigers passing attack and capitalize on the inefficiencies of Jefferson and Lee.



WR-X 80 Terrence Toliver, 6-5, 203, Sr., 3V -and- 02 Rueben Randle, 6-4, 207, So., 1V 82 James Wright, 6-2, 197, Fr., HS

LT 78 Joseph Barksdale, 6-6, 318, Sr., 3V 76 Chris Faulk, 6-6, 316, Fr., RS

LG 68 Josh Dworaczyk, 6-6, 295, Jr., 2V 79 Matt Branch, 6-6, 287, So., 1V

C 64 P.J. Lonergan, 6-4, 300, So., 1V 53 T-Bob Hebert, 6-3, 280, Jr., 2V

53 T-Bob Hebert, 6-3, 280, Jr., 2V RG 60 Will Blackwell, 6-4, 303, Jr., 2V -Or-74 Josh Williford, 6-7, 324, Fr., RS

RT 72 Alex Hurst, 6-6, 329, So., 1V 76 Chris Faulk, 6-6, 316, Fr., RS 75 Greg Shaw, 6-5, 295, Jr., SQ

WR-Y 19 Deangelo Peterson, 6-4, 243, Jr., 2V 88 Chase Clement, 6-5, 261, So., 1V 83 Mitch Joseph, 6-5, 265, Jr., 2V

WR-Z 10 Russell Shepard, 6-1, 188, So., 1V 21 Chris Tolliver, 6-1, 178, So., 1V 86 Kadron Boone, 6-0, 202, Fr., HS

QB 09 Jordan Jefferson, 6-5, 224, Jr., 2V 12 Jarrett Lee, 6-2, 207, Jr., 2V 08 TC McCartney, 6-3, 216, Jr. 01 Barrett Bailey, 6-4, 196, Fr., HS

RB 34 Stevan Ridley, 6-0, 223, Jr., 2V 42 Michael Ford, 5-10, 202, Fr., RS 18 Richard Murphy, 6-1, 206, Sr., 3V

FB 35 James Stampley, 5-10, 230, Jr., 1V 16 Spencer Ware, 5-11, 225, Fr., HS 44 J.C. Copeland, 6-1, 275, Fr., HS

SPECIAL TEAMS

KR

30 Josh Jasper, 5-11, 171, Jr., 3V 38 Drew Alleman, 5-11, 182, So., SQ

07 Patrick Peterson, 6-1, 222, Jr., 2V 13 Ron Brooks, 6-0, 179, Fr., 2V 17 Morris Claiborne, 6-0, 177, So., 1V 16 Spencer Ware, 5-11, 225, Fr., HS

DEFENSE

94 Kendrick Adams, 6-5, 255, Jr., JC LE 87 Chancey Aghayere, 6-4, 268, So., 1V 49 Barkevious Mingo, 6-5, 237, Fr., RS

LT 95 Lazarius Levingston, 6-4, 280, Sr., 3V 90 Michael Brockers, 6-6, 300, Fr., RS 97 Dennis Johnson, 6-2, 287, Jr., 1V

RT 92 Drake Nevis, 6-2, 285, Sr., 3V 77 Josh Downs, 6-1, 278, So., 1V

RE 89 Lavar Edwards, 6-5, 265, So., 1V 87 Chancey Aghavere, 6-4, 268, So., 1V 54 Justin Maclin, 6-4, 230, Fr., HS

SAM 23 Stefoin François, 6-1, 215, Jr., 1V 58 Tahj Jones, 6-2, 205, Fr., RS 52 Luke Muncie, 6-3, 223, Fr., HS

MIKE 11 Kelvin Sheppard, 6-3, 240, Sr., 3V 46 Kevin Minter, 6-1, 225, Fr., RS 31 D.J. Welter, 6-0, 226, Fr., HS

WILL 22 Ryan Baker, 6-0, 230, Jr., 2V 57 Lamin Barrow, 6-2, 221, Fr., RS

17 Morris Claiborne, 6-0, 177, So., 1V 14 Tyrann Mathieu, 5-9, 180, Fr., HS 26 Tharold Simon, 6-3, 190, Fr., HS

01 Eric Reid, 6-2, 207, Fr., HS SS 06 Craig Loston, 6-2, 200, Fr., RS 04 Jai Eugene, 5-11, 189, Sr., 3V

37 Karnell Hatcher, 6-2, 212, Jr., 2V FS 06 Craig Loston, 6-2, 200, Fr., RS 04 Jai Eugene, 5-11, 189, Sr., 3V

RCB 07 Patrick Peterson, 6-1, 222, Jr., 2V 14 Tyrann Mathieu, 5-9, 180, Fr., HS 26 Tharold Simon, 6-3, 190, Fr., HS

38 Derek Helton, 6-0, 178, Sr., 1V 30 Josh Jasper, 5-11, 171, Jr., 3V -or-

07 Patrick Peterson, 6-1, 222, Jr., 2V PR 02 Rueben Randle, 6-4, 207, So., 1V 17 Morris Claiborne, 6-0, 177, So., 1V 10 Russell Shepard, 6-1, 188, So., 1V

TIGERS FROM TEXAS

LSU has 11 scholarship players and three walk-ons who are from the state of Texas. Of the 14 Tigers who are from Texas, seven are listed on the LSU two-deep. LSU Tigers from Texas: S Craig Loston (Aldine), WR Russell Shepard (Houston), LB Nick Rice (Coppell), QB Jarrett Lee (Brenham), DB Ron Brooks (Irving), FB Kellen Theriot (Houston), LB Luke Muncie (Klein), PK Seth Mannon (Houston), LB Paul Felio (League City), OT Evan Washington (DeSoto), WR Terrence Toliver (Hempstead), TE/SNP Alex Russian (Round Rock), DE Chancey Aghayere (Garland), DT Michael Brockers (Houston). In addition, LSU special teams coach Joe Robinson was born in Abilene. For Aggies who follow recruiting, there isn't a more household name on the LSU roster than Craig Loston. To go through the entire roller coaster ride that was Loston's recruitment would read more like a novel than a short story, and we certainly can't do it justice in the limited amount of space in our Cotton Bowl preview. While no one would wish any ill-will on Loston, a victory over the Tigers would give Aggie fans a sense of justice, relief and for the die-hard 'recruitniks' among us, a little closure.

LSU A&M TIES

LSU tight end coach Steve Ensminger served as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Texas A&M from 1994-96. The Aggies' starting offensive center Matt Allen transferred to A&M after spending two seasons at LSU. He redshirted in 2006 and was a backup lineman in 2007 for the Tigers.

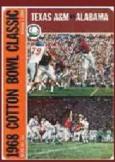


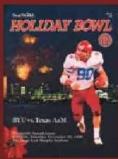


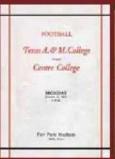
TOP 6 BOWL GAMES IN TEXAS A&M HISTORY

Texas A&M has appeared in 31 bowl games posting a 13-18 record. Since the formation of the Big 12, the Aggies' bowl record is 1-8, with the lone win coming in the 2001 Galleryfurniture.com Bowl over TCU. Here are Al's selections for the top 5 bowl games in Texas A&M history:













1. 1940 SUGAR BOWL (#1) Texas A&M 14, (#4) Tulane 13 January 1, 1940 • New Orleans, LA

John Kimbrough rushed for 159 yards on 25 carries and scored two touchdowns as the Aggies erased a 13-7 deficit in the fourth quarter to end an 11-0 season and claim the national championship.

2. 1968 COTTON BOWL CLASSIC Texas A&M 20, (#8) Alabama 16 January 1, 1968 • Dallas, TX

Student faced teacher as the Aggies capped a Cinderella season by appearing in the Cotton Bowl for the first time in 25 years and making its first postseason appearance in a decade. A&M Head Coach Gene Stallings met his former college coach, Alabama's "Bear" Bryant, and his Aggies won their seventh straight game. Bryant, facing A&M for the first time since his departure following the 1957 season, gave Stallings a ride off the field on his shoulders after the game.

3. 1990 SEA WORLD HOLIDAY BOWL Texas A&M 65, (#9) BYU 14

December 29, 1990 • San Diego, CA

Texas A&M had heard enough about BYU and their Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Ty Detmer. By halftime, a stunned and shell-shocked BYU squad went to the locker room staring a 30-point deficit in the face. The Aggies would pour it on some more after the break en route to a record-setting 65-14 victory in one of the most dominating bowl-game performances in college football history.

4. 1922 DIXIE CLASSIC

Texas A&M 22, Centre College 14 January 2, 1922 • Dallas, Texas

In the game that gave birth to the 12th Man legend, Head Coach Dana X. Bible's Aggies upset the Praying Colonels of Centre College. The victory over the "Champions of the South" put A&M football in the national spotlight.

5. 1986 50TH COTTON BOWL CLASSIC (#11) Texas A&M 36, (#16) Auburn 16 January 1, 1986 • Dallas, Texas

A&M stopped Heisman Trophy winner Bo Jackson on four tries at the Aggie end zone early in the fourth quarter to turn away Auburn's last shot at the lead before pulling away to a victory in the Aggies' first Cotton Bowl appearance in 18 years. The victory capped a 10-2 year for Jackie Sherrill's first Southwest Conference championship team.

6. 1988 COTTON BOWL CLASSIC (#13) Texas A&M 35, (#12) Notre Dame 10 January 1, 1988, Dallas, Texas

Once again, A&M earned a big victory over a frustrated Heisman Trophy winner, defeating Tim Brown and Notre Dame in the first meeting between the two schools. The Aggies handed the future national champs a setback behind a powerful rushing game spearheaded by freshman quarterback Bucky Richardson.

A&M SPECIAL TEAMS VS. LSU SPECIAL TEAMS

Randy Bullock was perhaps one of the most improved players on the Aggie football roster this season. His 117 straight connections on PAT's are a school record, and his 3 for 3 performance on field goals against Nebraska proved to be the difference in the game. Junior Coryell Judie was inserted as the team's return man late in the season, and promptly earned Big 12 Special Teams Player of the Week after his performance against Oklahoma. Unfortunately, the Aggies were unable to find an answer at punter all season long, and finished last in the Big 12 in punting.

TIGERS TO WATCH

LSU's all-everything defensive back Patrick Peterson is just as explosive on special teams as he is on defense. Peterson was named the SEC Special Teams Player of the Year after averaging 16.1 yards per punt return (26 for 418 with 2 touchdowns) and 29.3 yards per kickoff return (29 for 851). Senior kicker Josh Jasper led the nation this season with 26 field goals and also is an excellent pooch punter.

EDGE: LSU

Horrible special teams play cost A&M the Independence Bowl last year. While the Ags are much improved this season, the nation's most dynamic return man will force A&M to scheme around him. AT



PROGRAM COVERS: TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS MEDIA RELATIONS/ JASPER: COURTESY LSU SPORTS INFORMATION

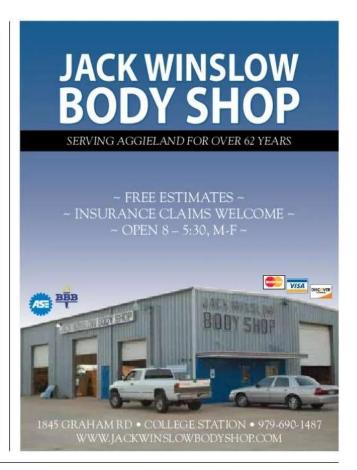


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TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL [GAME 10: AGS 42, BAYLOR 30]



◆PHOTO OF THE GAME

Following a failed fourth down attempt by Texas A&M, Baylor QB Robert Griffin busted through the line for a 71-yard touchdown run to extend the Bears' lead to 10-0 with about 8 1/2 minutes to go in the first quarter. The Aggies desperately needed a spark, and got just that with junior Coryell Judie returning the ensuing kickoff 84 yards for a touchdown. It was Judie's second straight game with a kickoff return for a touchdown after taking one back 100 yards against Oklahoma. Texas A&M rallied from a 16-point first-half deficit for a 42-30 win.

Q&A WITH TRUE FRESHMEN OFFENSIVE TACKLES LUKE JOECKEL AND JAKE MATTHEWS

What is your relationship like off the field?

JM: We are pretty good buddies. We joke around a lot. I'm always having a good time with Luke and Matt [Joeckel].

LJ: Matt, Jake and I are really close.

What's it like to have brothers in the program?

LJ: It's special. Matt is redshirting, so he gets to watch me every play and he does. He's a quarterback, but he grew up in an offensive lineman family so he knows a lot about the position. It's great to have your best friend with you.

JM: My brother graduated last year and he was

JM: My brother graduated last year and he was one of the main reasons I wanted to come here. We talk football often and he helps me a lot.

Do you give Matt a hard time about redshirting while you guys are playing as true freshmen?

LJ: We had a coach in high school who would talk about guys who didn't really play, but just wanted to be a part of the team. He called them "hamburger eaters" – guys who were just there for the food. I joke around with Matt and call him a hamburger eater. He's not one – he's a great player – but it's fun to joke around with him like that sometimes.

A year ago you were finishing up high school football. Are you surprised with how much has changed since then?

JM: Looking back from where both of us were a year ago is pretty crazy. We've both been really blessed.

Lt: It feels like it was so long ago. I feel like I've been here eight years already. It's crazy to think about for sure.

Who has helped you the most on the field?

JM: I'd say Luke since he came in early. We are always talking about different ideas and techniques. Especially when you're trying to block Von Miller every day in practice.

U: The whole line

You both are nice guys off the field. How do you play with such a nasty streak on the field?

U: It's a mindset that my dad taught me back in peewee football. He always talked about being the nicest guy off the field, but when you're on the field, you have to be the meanest, nasti-

TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL [GAME 11: AGS 9, NEBRASKA 6]

est guy out there. He instilled that in me pretty early.

JM: Sometimes we get a little competition out there about who has made better blocks to try to get in each other's heads and push us to work a little harder.

What has been the biggest adjustment from high school?

LJ: Definitely the speed of the game.

JM: I agree. The speed and the size and
strength of our opponents is a lot different. Also
the playbook – my high school playbook was
nothing compared to this. It really took me a
while to really get it down. Now that I'm comfortable with it. I like it a lot.

What is Coach Turner like? Has he been what you expected?

JM: He's really funny and just a great coach. I've learned so much since I got here. I love him as our O-line coach and really glad to have him.

LJ: I expected him to be a fiery guy, but he's very intense. He's definitely made me so much better. I came in a little raw in some areas and he is so big on the small things and teaching technique that has really improved my play.

Do you prefer to pass block or run block? JM: It's good to mix it up. When you do that, you keep the defense quessing and that's what I

you keep the defense guessing and that's what I really like to do.

Lt: I'm definitely a run blocking fan. They say

LI: I'm definitely a run blocking fan. They say pass blocking is what you get paid for and the run blocking is the fun part of the game. I love coming off the ball and just popping a guy in the mouth. I enjoy pass blocking too though.

What does it mean to you guys for Cyrus Gray to be so successful running the ball?

LJ: It's great to see him be successful and he shows us appreciation as well. He's a great running back. It's cool to see him do well and it shows that we are doing well too.

JM: I love blocking for Cyrus. He's a great guy and a great teammate. I can't think of anyone I'd want to block for more. I love the guy.

What was it like to experience the celebration on the field after the Nebraska win?

JM: Afterwards, I watched a replay on SportsCenter and Kyle Field was covered with fans and it still looked like the stands were full. I couldn't believe there were so many people in there. I'll remember that for the rest of my life. LJ: I feel so blessed to have experienced this during my freshman year. We would have 10,000 at the most at my high school games and I remember how special that was, but there's no greater experience than Kyle Field.



A PHOTO OF THE GAME

In front of a Kyle Field record crowd of 90,079 and a national TV audience, the Wrecking Crew had a performance for the ages, holding No. 8 Nebraska to just six points on two field goals. Senior All-American Von Miller rose to the occasion with the game on the line, recording 4 tackles and 2 sacks on the Cornhuskers' final possession. Cyrus Gray's 202 all purpose yards and Randy Bullock's three field goals gave the Aggies just enough to defeat Nebraska, 9-6.







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SEIZING THE MOMENT

Against all obstacles, senior linebacker Michael Hodges fulfilled his dream of playing college football BY BRIAN DAVIS '01 SOUTH DIVISION TINAS ASAS UNINCESSITY

You're not tall enough, you're not big enough, you're not strong enough, you're not fast enough. Texas A&M linebacker Michael Hodges has heard it all every year for his entire life. Just like his position coach Dat Nguyen did before him, he has proven again and again that he is those things, and so much more.

Now a graduate student at Texas A&M, Hodges is from a close-knit family in the small town of Helotes, Texas just outside of San Antonio. His family has raised cattle for as long as he can remember. Not a big herd, just something his father, Steve, did as a hobby and used to teach his children life lessons.

Hodges grew up playing little league baseball. For whatever reason, football didn't come into the picture until he reached the seventh grade. When he finally got the chance, he jumped at the opportunity.

"I knew I wanted to play," Hodges said, "but I didn't even know how to put on my pads. And I didn't know all of the positions."

The coaches put Hodges at defensive end and had to teach him everything.

"Being so small, I got put on the B team at first," he recalled. "But then I started to shine and moved up to the A team because of my speed. I never stopped from there. The passion was definitely in my soul after that first season."

When it came time for high school, Hodges knew he wanted to continue playing. And this time, he knew exactly what position he wanted to play.

"My brother was a senior Will linebacker when I was a freshman," he said.
"What else was I going to do besides follow in his footsteps? I had a good relationship with the linebacker coach who was there at that time and that really sealed the deal."

Hodges continued to shine at O'Connor High School, which was relatively new at the time. What they didn't have in talent, they made up for with hard work and performed well in their district. But few of them had the potential to be successful at any big Texas universities. Hodges believed he did, but none of the schools agreed. They thought he was not tall enough, big enough, strong enough or fast enough.

"I thought Rice and SMU were going to offer, but they both dropped me," Hodges recalled. "A&M wasn't even an option. I didn't even get an informal letter from here."

The one school that did offer a scholarship was the Air Force Academy. There were no family connections to the armed forces or any goals to be in the military, but when he was presented with the opportunity, Hodges jumped all over it without even taking a recruiting visit. It didn't matter, because his dream was to play Division 1 football and this was his chance. His first day there was the first day of basic training.

"I showed up and all these parents were there and they were crying and all that," he recalled. "I had no idea what I was getting into. I was trying to talk to people and I was getting yelled at for talking to people. I was like, 'What's the problem?' It was kind of a slap in the face."

Hodges gave it two full years, but was never happy at the Air Force Academy.

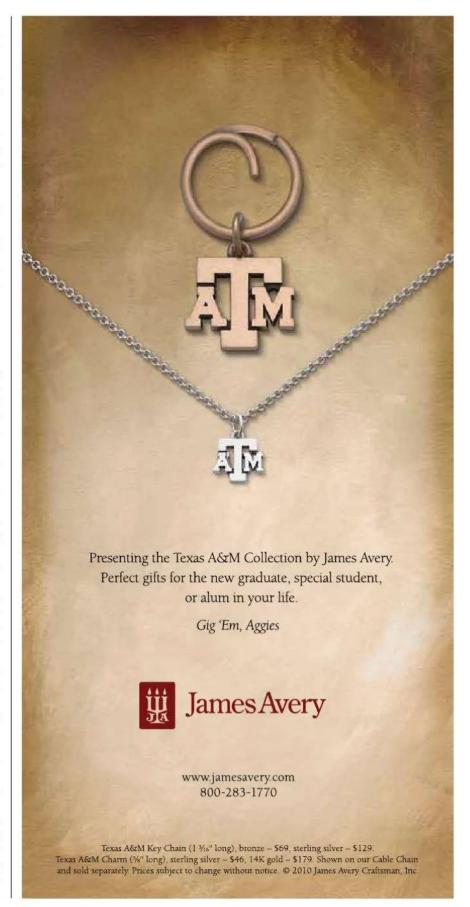
"When you wake up and you are not happy with what you are doing you have to make a decision," he said. "By far that was the hardest decision of my life. But I'm completely pleased with my decision."

There were a bunch of reasons why he decided to leave the Air Force Academy, but ultimately he just wanted to go somewhere he could play. That led Hodges to transfer to Texas A&M. He knew the 12th Man tradition of a walk-on getting to play on kickoffs and that was his goal. He asked a friend to look up when the tryouts were for walk-ons.

Hodges showed up to the tryout, not knowing a soul on the field. He was determined to prove that he could contribute to the team. The first person to notice him was graduate assistant Jaxson Appel.

"Looking back I'm pretty sure he pushed my name a little forward," Hodges said. "I remember him coming up to me and asking, 'Do you think you can get down there and bust a wedge on kickoff?' I said, 'That's what I'm all about so let's do it.' He gave me a little more confidence in my performance at the tryout."

While sitting out the 2008 season due to NCAA transfer rules, he was able to workout and practice with the team. Back on the field, Hodges realized that he still had a lot of ability and his expectations went higher than just contributing on special teams. He wanted to pursue his Division 1 dream, Before that fol-









"The type of environment we have here at Texas A&M gives everyone an opportunity. Luckily I was able to seize that opportunity and contribute to the team. Everyone has an opportunity to do great things here."

- MICHAEL HODGES

lowing spring, he got an opportunity to meet with then-defensive coordinator Joe Kines.

"I told him to give me a chance," Hodges said. "He told me it was do or die. I was either going to earn a position on the team or there was really no reason for me to be there. We were both very blunt with each other. That's the way it was for our entire relationship and it worked out really well."

Coach Kines brought Hodges in at second string and he got some playing time. Everything was going well. He got to play on Kyle Field for the spring game and got his first interception. It was an exciting time. Then the following Tuesday the team had a full pads practice to close out spring drills.

"I was so physical that spring," he recalled, "and I tackled Cyrus [Gray] from behind. Trying to hold him up was probably my worst decision that spring because I landed awkwardly on my leg."

Hodges finished the practice and didn't think much of it. When it was over, team physician J.P. Bramhall examined him and needed only 30 seconds to determine the problem. Hodges had torn his ACL.

"Coach Kines was right there when they were telling me what it was and he guaranteed me that I wasn't going to get lost in the mix," Hodges said. "When they told me the fastest recovery they could do was four months, I think they were just blowing smoke, but I didn't care. We both decided right there that I would be back in four months."

Hodges made his A&M debut in the second game of the 2009 season against Utah State – about 4 months and a week after his injury. He wasn't 100%, but was able to do enough to help the team.

"Nobody was going to keep me off that field as long as they let me play," he said. "Coach Kines didn't think I was ready. I agreed with him on a lot of things, but I was going to fight that one to the death."

Two games later, Hodges made his first career start at middle linebacker in the inaugural Southwest Classic against Arkansas at Cowboys Stadium. He started eight of the team's final nine games, getting better and better along the way.

"In hindsight maybe I shouldn't have gone out there so early," he admitted, "but we needed to win games and I felt like I could make an impact on that. That's what it came down to."

Hodges finished the year by recording at least seven tackles in five of the last six games including a game-high nine stops in the Independence Bowl against Georgia. His 67 tackles on the season ranked fifth on the team and was good enough for an honorable mention All-Big 12 selection by the league's head coaches. And he did it all while playing at less than 100 percent. After a long journey, his dream of playing Division 1 football had finally come true.

Following that Independence Bowl loss, Coach Kines announced his retirement from Texas A&M. It was an odd experience for Hodges, but he admitted the writing was on the wall.

"He missed his family," Hodges said. "He always talked about his grandkids back home. Even if he had stayed, I'm confident he would have been gone when his daughter's tragic accident happened, and rightfully so. God works in mysterious ways."

Despite his departure, they have been able to keep a great relationship. In fact, Kines was the only coach Hodges asked to write him a letter of recommendation to get into graduate school.

"He's been such a great supporter," Hodges said. "It's odd because of how our relationship started – so distant and harsh. I had a really thorned feeling about him and our relationship because I was so sour about the situation I was in. But our relationship developed like many coach/player relationships do and now I consider him a mentor and a friend."

Coach Kines' departure was certainly disheartening for him. Hodges was worried that he would have to start from ground zero again with a new coach. That turned out to be Tim DeRuyter



from the Air Force Academy.

DeRuyter got the defensive coordinator job at Air Force the semester before Hodges left. In fact, DeRuyter tried to convince him to stay because they were thin at linebacker, but Hodges had already made his decision to leave.

"Coming from the Air Force Academy, we are both guys who didn't get recruited by other schools, so we both have chips on our shoulders," Hodges said. "We've butted heads before, but that's part of it. What he says goes. We have a great open relationship where we can deal with any issues face to face."

Hodges also got a new position coach during the transition - the aforementioned Aggie legend Dat Nguyen.

"I didn't follow Texas A&M when I was young, so I didn't realize what he brought to this school," Hodges admitted. "There was so much hype about it, but he was so humble when he got here. He made us do introductions and he refused to do his own. He said, 'If you don't know about me, don't worry about it. If you do, then let's move on to you.' I thought he was

HODGES ON COACH DERUYTER

He's just so dang smart. I don't know If I've been around a coach who speaks so passionately about everything he says. When it comes down to it he makes great calls. He is clutch. Some of his calls, it's like he's looking at the other team's call sheet. That really puts us in a good position to make plays. If anyone ever tries to question a call, we stop that question pretty quick because he may miss one or two, but the next one is going to be dead on and we're going to get that quarterback in his blind side. It's exciting and fun to play when you know you're going to have an opportunity like that.



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going to come in there cursing at us, but he's probably the most soft spoken guy. He's a great Christian who follows the book. He's taught me so much."

By the time spring football rolled around, Hodges felt much better about his chances of keeping what he had worked so hard for. He was finally healthy and able to perform to the best of his ability, and that meant more than words. Entering his final season of eligibility, Hodges was a leader of a new defense determined to earn back the respect that Texas A&M was once known for.

Meanwhile, Hodges was embarking on a new journey academically. He graduated Magna Cum Laude in May 2010 with a degree in sport management with a minor in business, and entered the Mays Business School to pursue a master's degree in marketing. As if being a starting college football player wasn't challenging enough on it's own. Hodges started 2010 just like he left off the previous year and got better and better as the season went on. Not only did he stay healthy, he also became a better student of the game and was more vocal on the field.

"I realized I had to talk more than anybody out there especially in the front seven, so I had to know what was going on."

Perhaps no player knows that better than All-American Von Miller, who said he would give part of his Butkus Award to Hodges if he could.

"Whenever I'm thinking off the field or at home, I always hear his voice," Miller said. "My conscience is narrated by Michael. I've relied on Michael for most of the season. He's a big part of my success."

Hodges was one of the most consistent players on defense throughout the season and an integral part of the revival of the Wrecking Crew. In the Oklahoma game he reached a whole new level. When the dust had settled and the Sooners were walking off the Kyle Field in defeat, Hodges had a career-best 19 tackles and two sacks. His performance earned him Big 12 Player of the Week and honorable mention National Player of the Week honors.

"That was the biggest win I've ever been a part of," he said. "So much hype came from that for me personally and our defense, which was long overdue. I called my parents on Sunday after the game and was telling them how surreal it all was."

Two weeks later, Hodges was again named Big 12 Defensive Player of the Week after a 14-tackle performance in the upset win over Nebraska.

"He's meant everything," Miller added.
"For him to finally get the recognition and accolades he deserved, it felt good."

Hodges finished the season ranked fifth in the conference with a team-leading 111 tackles, earning him second team All-Big 12 accolades by The Associated Press.

"It's been exciting and a lot of fun," Hodges said. "You couldn't write a better script. Well, I guess you could. Maybe a win against Oklahoma State would have been a little better. And a Big 12 Championship. But I cherish this whole semester."

Hodges also completed his first semester of grad school with a 4.0 grade point average. He was named a first-team ESPN Academic All-American, the first Aggie to earn that honor since offensive lineman Seth McKinney in 2001.

"This has been the most difficult and rewarding semester of my life, balancing school and football," Hodges admitted. "With the marketing program I've gotten into, let's just say there's a big difference between undergraduate and graduate school. But I know it's so rewarding and I'm in a great place right now."

Now that his college football days are almost over, Hodges is facing something that he's never experienced before. He's always known what the next step is, but right now he doesn't.

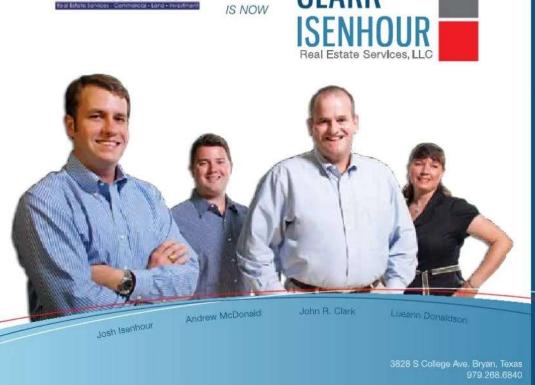
"I've definitely got some soul searching to do to figure out what the next step is, but hopefully that comes sooner than later."

One thing is still for certain. If anyone tells Hodges he isn't good enough to do whatever it is, he'll prove them he can do it and more, again and again.



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AI AWARDS AND PREDICTIONS

BY AI STAFF

The regular season is over, conference champions have been crowned and only the bowl matchups remain in the 2010 college football season. That means it's time for the AI staff to hand out our annual Big 12 awards and make our bowl predictions. The winner of the bowl contest earns bragging rights for a year, while the loser has to write the editor's note in the next issue.

BIG12AWARDS

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

WR Justin Blackmon, Oklahoma State

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR LB Von Miller, Texas A&M

OFFENSIVE FRESHMAN OF THE YEAR

QB Taylor Martinez, Nebraska

DEFENSIVE FRESHMAN OF THE YEAR

B Shaun Lewis, Oklahoma State

COACH OF THE YEAR Mike Sherman, Texas A&M

ASSISTANT COACH OF THE YEAR Tim DeRuyter, Texas A&M

ALLBIG12TEAM

OFFENSE

QB Brandon Weeden, Oklahoma State RB Daniel Thomas, Kansas State* RB Kendall Hunter, Oklahoma State WR Justin Blackmon, Oklahoma State

WR Ryan Broyles, Oklahoma*
WR Jeff Fuller, Texas A&M

OL Tim Barnes, Missouri
OL Levy Adcock, Oklahoma State

OL Rick Henry, Nebraska OL Nate Solder, Colorado*

OL Eric Mensik, Oklahoma

DEFENSE

DL Sam Acho, Texas

DL Jared Crick, Nebraska*

DL Lucas Patterson, Texas A&M

DL Jeremy Beal, Oklahoma*

LB Von Miller, Texas A&M*

LB Lavonte David, Nebraska

LB Orie Lemon, Oklahoma State

LB Michael Hodges, Texas A&M

DB Prince Amukamara, Nebraska

DB Coryell Judie, Texas A&M

DB Eric Hagg, Nebraska

DB Quinton Carter, Oklahoma

SPECIAL TEAMS

K Dan Bailey, Oklahoma State

P Quinn Sharp, Oklahoma State*

KR/PR William Powell, Kansas State MI

*repeat selection from last season

AI STAFF BOWL PREDICTIONS	BRIAN DAVIS	KIM DAVIS	ROB HAVENS	JEREMY KSKONDA	STACEY	IA SON MCCONNELL	KATE MCCONNELL	SHAWN KRUSE	GENTRY WOODARD	EYSSA HAMILTON
New Mexico BYU vs. UTEP	BYU	BYU	BYU	BYU	BYU	BYU	BYU	BYU	UTEP	BYU
uDrove Humanitarian Fresno State vs. Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Fresno State	Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Northern Illinois	Fresno State
R&L Carriers New Orleans Troy vs. Ohio	Troy	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Troy	Ohio
Beef 'O' Brady's Louisville vs. Southern Miss	Southern Miss	Southern Miss	Southern Miss	Louisville	Southern Miss	Louisville	Lousville	Southern Miss	Southern Miss	Southern Miss
MAACO Las Vegas Utah vs. Boise State	Bose State	Utah	Boise State	Bose State	Boise State	Boise State	Boise State	Boise State	Boise State	Boise State
S.D. County Credit Union Poinsettia San Diego State vs. Navy	San Diego State	Navy	Navy	San Diego State	San Diego State	Navy	Navy	Navy	San Diego State	Navy
Sheraton Hawaii Tulsa vs. Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Tuka	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii
Little Ceasars Toledo vs. Florida International	Toledo	Florida International	Toledo	Toledo	Toledo	Toledo	Florida International	Florida International	Toledo	Florida International
Advocare V100 Independence Air Force vs. Georgia Tech	Air Force	Georgia Tech	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Georgia Tech	Air Force	Georgia Tech	Air Force
Champs Sports West Virginia vs. N.C. State	West Virginia	West Virginia	West Virginia	N.C. State	West Virginia	West Virginia	N.C. State	West Virginia	West Virginia	West Virginia
Insight Iowa vs. Missouri	Missouri	lowa	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri
Northrop Grumman Military Maryland vs. East Carolina	Maryland	East Carolina	Maryland	Maryland	Maryland	Maryland	East Carolina	Maryland	Maryland	Maryland
Texas Illinois vs. Baylor	Baylor	Baylor	Baylor	Illinois	Baylor	Illinois	Ilinois	Baylor	Illinos	Baylor
Valero Alamo Oklahoma State vs. Arizona	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma State
Bell Helicopter Armed Forces SMU vs. Army	SMU	SMU	SMU	SMU	SMU	SMU	SMU	Army	SMU	SMU
New Era Pinstripe Syracuse vs. Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Syracuse	Syracuse	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Syracuse	Kansas State	Kansas State
Franklin American Music City North Carolina vs. Tennessee	North Carolina	Tennessee	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	Tennessee	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina
Bridgepoint Education Holiday Nebraska vs. Washington	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska
Meineke Car Care South Florida vs. Clemson	Clemson	Clemson	Clemson	South Florida	Clemson	Clemson	Clemson	South Florida	Clemson	Clemson
Hyundai Sun Miami vs. Notre Dame	Miami	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Notre Dame
AutoZone Liberty Georgia vs. Central Florida	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia
Chick-Fil-A Florida State vs. South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	Florida State	Florida State	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	Florida State	South Carolina	South Carolina
Ticket City Northwestern vs. Texas Tech	Texas Tech	NW	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	NW	NW	NW	Texas Tech	Texas Tech
Outback Florida vs. Penn State	Penn State	Penn State	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Penn State	Penn State
Capital One Michigan State vs. Alabama	Michigan State	Michigan State	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Michigan State	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Michigan State
Gator Michigan vs. Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Michigan	Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Mississippi State	Michigan
Rose Bowl Game by Vizio (BCS) Wisconsin vs. TCU	TCU	TCU	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	TCU	TCU	TCU	TCU	TCU
Tostitos Fiesta (BCS) Connecticut vs. Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma
Discover Orange (BCS) Stanford vs. Virginia Tech	Stanford	Virginia Tech	Stanford	Virginia Tech	Stanford	Stanford	Virginia Tech	Stanford	Virginia Tech	Virginia Tech
Allstate Sugar (BCS) Arkansas vs. Ohio State	Arkansas	Arkansas	Arkansas	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Arkansas	Arkansas	Ohio State	Ohio State
GoDaddy.com Middle Tennessee vs. Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)	Miami (Ohio)
AT&T Cotton LSU vs. Texas A&M	Texas A&M	LSU	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M				
BBVA Compass Pitt vs. Kentucky	Pitt	Pitt	Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky	Pitt	Kentucky	Pitt	Pitt	Pitt
Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl Nevada vs. Boston College	Nevada	Boston College	Nevada	Nevada	Nevada	Nevada	Boston College	Nevada	Boston College	Nevada
Tostitos BCS National Championship Auburn vs. Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon

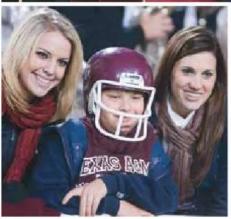




(above) Texas A&M students were out in full force at Camp Cotton to claim their spot in line for Cotton Bowl tickets. Fortunately, no lists were eaten this time. (left) Former A&M head football coach Emory Bellard greets the Kyle Field crowd before the Nebraska game. The inventor of the wishbone offense, Bellard was recently diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), known as Lou Gehrig's disease. (below) Mark Turgeon saws varsity's horns off with Mike and Nikki Oyedeji following the Aggies' win over Washington in a game that was dedicated to their son, Tobi Oyedeji. Tobi was lost tragically following a car accident in Houston on May 16, 2010. (bottom, left to right) Fans celebrate Aggie victories over Nebraska (left) and Baylor (middle) in football and in basketball (right).









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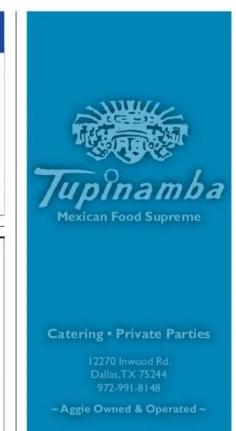


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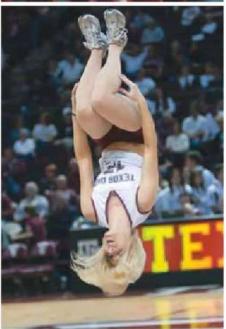
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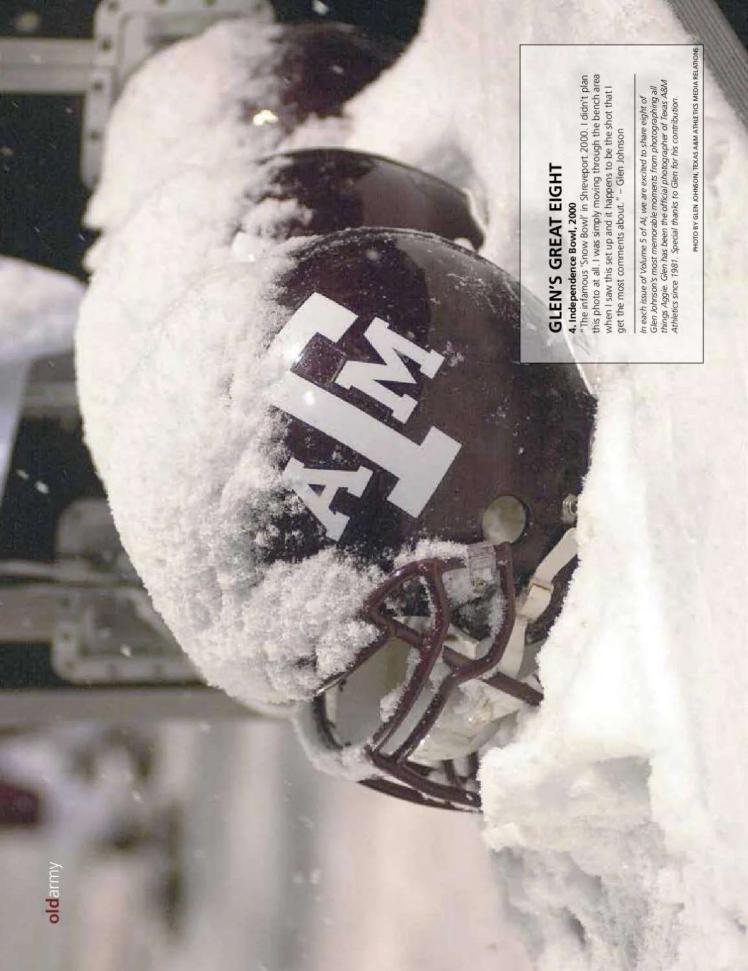












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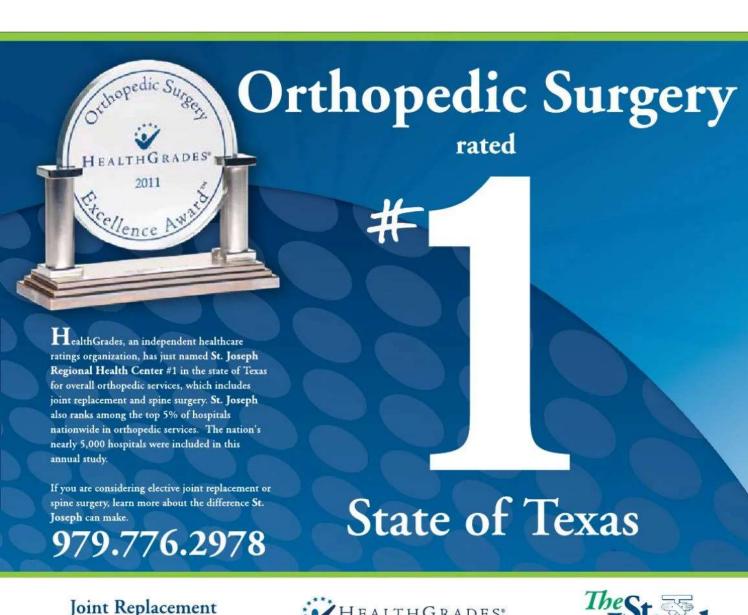


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